

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

~~1. A method for multicast document printing, the method comprising:~~

- a) receiving document data to be printed at a host, wherein said document data includes a number of documents to be created from the document data;
- 5 b) dividing the number of documents to be created into at least two batches for at least two corresponding, separate printers;
- c) formatting the document data into a print job;
- d) embedding information for distribution of the batches to the corresponding printers into the print job; and
- 10 e) transmitting the print job to the at least two separate printers connected by a common network to the host.

2. The method of claim 1, wherein the host is a printer.

3. The method of claim 1, wherein the host is application software resident in a printer.

4. The method of claim 1, wherein the host is a computer.

5. The method of claim 1, wherein the host is a scanner.

6. The method of claim 2, wherein the printer further comprises a multi-function peripheral.

7. The method of claim 2, wherein the printer further comprises a copier.

8. The method of claim 2, wherein the printer further comprises a fax machine.

9. The method of claim 1, wherein the transmitting the print job to at least two separate printers includes reception and temporary storage at a store-and-forward device.

10. A computer readable medium, said medium containing software code comprising:

- a) code operable to receive document data to be printed at a host, wherein said document data includes a number of documents to be created from the document data;
- 25 b) code operable to divide the number of documents to be created into at least two batches for at least two corresponding, separate printers;
- c) code operable to format the document data into a print job;
- d) code operable to embed information for distribution of the batches to the corresponding printers into the print job; and
- 30 e) code operable to transmit the print job to the at least two separate printers connected by a common network to the host

11. The medium of claim 10, wherein the computer readable medium is read by a computer.

12. The medium of claim 10, wherein the computer readable medium is read by a printer.

13. The medium of claim 10, wherein the medium is a diskette.

14. The medium of claim 10, wherein the medium is a compact disc.

15. The medium of claim 10, wherein the medium is a network-accessible file.

16. A network device, comprising:

- a) a port operable to connect to a network and receiving document data to be converted into hard copy output with a predetermined number of documents to be created;
- b) a processor in communication with the port, operable to format the document data into a print job and to assign batches to at least two printers, wherein the sum of documents to be created within each batch is substantially equal to the number of documents to be created; and
- c) a communications port operable to transmit the batches to printers connected to the network device by a common network.

17. The network device of claim 16, wherein the network device is a computer.

18. The network device of claim 16, wherein the network device is a printer.

19. The network device of claim 16, wherein the processor is a raster image processor.